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boxers pummeled one another with their fists. Their hands were smeared with a mixture of oil and soot so that they would leave a mark wherever they hit. The tilters were hot and eager, but did not greatly hurt one another, for their chief effort was to attract attention by means of gestures and plastic attitudes which would impress the girls and women with their supple, nervous and muscular bodies, shining like bronze under the sun because of the sweat which the effort of fighting brought on.

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Combats between buffaloes followed these amusements, then cocks were brought on and the whole audience crowded around. Passions rose to a fever pitch in the whole mass of spectators, who had been imbibing brandy freely. Ironic clamors rained down on the men who had let themselves be beaten and whose faces were smeared with black on their return, while enthusiastic shouts greeted the victors. In spite of all the excitement, the sun, the heat and the brandy, the whole mass of people remained quite moderate and the festivities [209] [Illustration] [210] [Blank page] [211] always kept a gay and gracious air. The enthusiasm for the fighters, the shouts and the bravos only lasted for a moment, and all of them, both lucky and unlucky, were sponged, given drink and cherished with equal solicitude so that they soon forgot their momentary rivalry.

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Children of both sexes then approached the pyre. They had all fastened their sampots and skirts in view of what was to happen next. Sacks were brought which were full of copper coins, to which a few silver coins had been added. Members of the family of the deceased then climbed up on the pyre and threw this small change broadcast into the horde of children. An indescribable tumult followed, accompanied by sharp cries. There was quarreling and fighting, and many little pairs of hands could be seen grabbing for the same copper coins. All of them would have liked to get the few white coins.

The parents and older people watched the coin hunt, which reminded them of the time when they were children and at the same time reminded them of the name of a dead man whose family had been generous to them once in similar circumstances.

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Now all the ritual ceremonies had been accomplished and it remained only to proceed to the last one; setting fire to the pyre.

Stiff lengths of rattan were attached to the four corners of the catafalque and fastened to the ground with stakes. Rockets slid along the lengths of rattan, and when the time came they would shoot up and supposedly light the pyre. In reality this is only a

536 of Burmese origin is called I-Ke or Lakhone-I-Ke.

There are also animated shadow theaters in Laos, like the Chinese or Javanese shadow theaters. The figurines in them are quite large, completely articulated and strikingly lifelike in all their attitudes and in their gestures, which correspond perfectly to the words of their manipulators. Some of these shadow figures are so well articulated that they scrupulously reproduce the movements of the mouth, nose, eyes, etc. Finally, so that they need envy no one, the Laotians also have a puppet theater [Guignol] like our French puppet theater of Lyons. The puppets represent local types and costumes, banter certain social classes with their sarcasm and ridicule certain personages who lend themselves easily to criticism. The artists who make these little wooden knaves function have as much verve, malice and wit as their colleagues in Europe, and although their wit is usually somewhat coarse it is perfectly adapted to the milieu. The puppets enjoy great public favor, and so their performances, which last far into the night, are among those most enjoyed by an audience which is always numerous and attentive. Old men, adults and children come and stay for hours at a time, gaping and lifting their faces towards the opening out of which the puppets' heads and shoulders protrude. The witty sayings, jokes of all kinds and even the gestures of these puppets often shake the whole audience with a fit of uncontrollable laughter.

535 462 857 Dancing. The dance (fone in Laotian) finds little favor with the Laotians. Scarcely any but men engage in this pastime, and they dance a kind of Pyrrhic during the feast of rockets and a Phallic at the time of the pirogue regattas. During festivals singers and [illegible]-stresses often mix dancing with their songs, but it is limited to a few rhythmic gestures of the hands and upper part of the body, without any movement of the feet.

There are no professional women dancers in Laos as there are in Siam or Cambodia. I know of only one ballet corps, [219] that of Luang-Prabang, which is composed exclusively of children and very young people. This group, which is nicely costumed, is developing under the direction of one master and several supervisors. It executes figures and a few steps which are always very graceful, while carrying multicolored lanterns in the shape of balloons or flowers. The dances are accompanied by songs and form a most harmonious and pleasant ensemble.